

Surprise and dissatisfaction have been caused by the refusal of the Governors of the Western Dispensary, Westminster, to confirm the appointment of Dr. Ethel Vernon, who was temporarily appointed, and has since acted, as medical officer to the institution, in last November. The reason is to be found in the announcement at the Annual Meeting of the Governors that Dr. W. H. Allechin, hon. consulting physician to the dispensary, would resign if Miss Vernon were permitted to continue her work as an attendant medical officer. Apparently, Dr. Allechin was abroad when the appointment was first made, or his narrow, intolerant attitude towards women would no doubt have caused a protest from him in the first instance. It is from men of this type that nurses must expect opposition to their just demands, and it is not surprising to find that Dr. Allechin is an active member of the Central Hospital Council for London which is organising opposition to the Nurses' Registration Bill.

### A Book of the Week.

#### THE AMERICAN PRISONER.\*

Mr. Phillpotts has given us in this book his own Devon with a variant; and this new element, of history and of adventure, is as charming as novel in his work. He is, as of old, racy of the soil; the men and women who work on Malherb's farm are all of the same blood to which the Children of the Mist belonged. But he has chosen a larger canvas this time, and filled it with many figures; showing himself a master of his craft, both in the arrangement and in the selection of them all.

In the opening of the story, where the impulsive, pig-headed, generous, choleric Malherb, bitten with the new idea of cultivating Dartmoor, rides over the lovely wilderness to choose a site for his future home, one is irresistibly reminded of one of the most perfect of Mr. Quiller Couch's short studies—the story of "Lucille's." The house that only a century ago stood there, the land wrested from the clutch of the moor with so much labour and patience—all in one short century come and gone—nothing left now but a few foundations, a few nettles in a ditch, sure and hateful sign of the one-time proximity of man.

There is a pathos about this passage which marks all the progress of the exciting story; for exciting it is, though the excitement is largely history, and Mr. Phillpotts has only drawn upon his imagination for the filling-in—for such characters as Peter Norcot and Lovey Lee. The centre, round which romance gathers thick—romance with a tinge of horror in it—is that prison built upon the moor for the reception of prisoners of war. It is wonderful that the theme has not inspired other novelists; but, with the exception of the allusions to it in "The Wescotts," by Mr. Quiller Couch, the present reviewer does not remember that it has been ever utilised before.

Oecil Stark, a young American gentleman, rich and of noble heart, is among the prisoners, and he comes in touch with Grace Malherb through a slight accident. Grace was taken by her suitor, Peter Norcot, to see the stone church which was being erected by the labour of the prisoners; and Cecil, who was at

the top of a ladder; accidentally dropped a chisel, which fell within an inch or two of the girl's head.

Peter Norcot is the villain of the piece, and a pretty thorough-paced villain, too. In his persistent pursuit of an unwilling girl, he is just a little like one of Mr. Jerome's stage villains; but he is subtly sketched in. He is exactly the kind of man, with his show of forbearance, his polished manner, his poetical quotations, to take in and lead by the nose a simple, passionate nature like that of Grace's father.

One is always longing to box Malherb's ears, and yet, as Grace says, one forgives him all. He inspires a kind of affectionate pity even among his own workpeople. And Norcot plays upon him like an instrument, understanding well how to sweep the whole gamut of his easily-roused passions. Another factor in the story is the lost family treasure—the Malherb amphora—which Lovey Lee has purloined, and keeps hidden in a cave on Dartmoor; but the portion of the whole fresh, original, spirited tale which will make the widest appeal is just the fine account of the happenings within the sad walls of that war prison; the "sorrowful sighing of the prisoners" breathes over the tale an atmosphere of horror. But the prison is empty, its work done, before the story closes.

"Moor folk told how no sweet water would cleanse those floors of blood, how pestilence still lurked in the vaults and foul recesses; how shadows of mournful spirits here stalked together through the live-long night, wailed to the moon, and only vanished when grey dawn disturbed them. Dark stories gathered above the empty war prison like crows around a corpse. Rumour hinted of secret graves and murders unrecorded and unguessed; the crypts gave up human bones to the searchers; unholy inscriptions and curses against a forgetful God stared out upon the dark walls at the light of torches; signs of infamy, of evil, and of all the passion, agony, and heartbreak of vanished thousands appeared; hoarded horrors came to light; a spirit of misery untold still haunted the mouldering limbo."

G. M. R.

### Coming Events.

*March 4th.*—Women's National Liberal Association, Palace Chambers, Westminster. Address on "State Registration of Trained Nurses," by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, 3.15.

*March 9th.*—Meeting of the Parliamentary Bills Committee, Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 431, Oxford Street, 5 p.m.

*March 11th.*—Meeting at the Mansion House in support of the appeal for funds for the removal of King's College Hospital, 3 p.m.

*March 18th.*—Conference of Members of Nurses' Leagues and Societies to discuss "Organisation with a view to International Affiliation," by the invitation of Miss Isla Stewart, Vice-President of the International Council of Nurses, 431, Oxford Street. Tea 4 p.m.; Conference 4.30 p.m.

*March 24th.*—Executive Committee of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 431, Oxford Street, W., to arrange for the Annual Meeting. Tea, 4 p.m.; Meeting, 4.30.

\*By Eden Phillpotts. (Methuen.)

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